

Joe's Dugout

By Great Grandson LaDrue Dorton

My Great Grandfather had a station on the overland trail over on seven mile pass between Lehi and Fairfield. Most of the stuff I have is because I read, because he died long before I was born. I don't want to spend a lot of time on that although I have quite a bit of material here including some stuff I downloaded from a website of the Pony Express.

He also had a Pony Express station that was called "Joe's Dugout." There's quite a bit of this in the history in the Lehi History book that Mr. Van Wagoner put together. I have a copy of it here and some of it I got out of a historical sketch compiled by Andrew Fjield, if you know who he was.

This is an account of an incident that happened after they were established at the post out there. It says, "One night", speaking about my great Grandfather, "One night after he had gone to bed, he was aroused by a knock on the door. He inquired who was there. And a voice answered "Me, your friend." Dorton opened the door and in came Chief Blackhawk doubled up with pain. He said, "Show me, heap sick." He had been wounded by a bullet which grazed his abdomen letting out some of his entrails. Dorton examined the wound and then with a common needle and thread sewed up the dusty chieftain's belly and told

to go into the dugout for the night.

In the morning he was gone, but some months later he returned fully recovered. He brought with him a very large lake trout which he gave to his benefactor. He always referred to “Cho”, as he called him, saved his life.

He said, “One of the serious handicaps of the location was the problem of procuring water for man and beast. During the entire stay, the water that was used for all purposes was hauled from the Jordan River in common wooden barrels and part of the time with an ox team.

Dorton decided to attempt getting water by digging a well. He hired Isaac Shelton and James Powell who dug a hole to the depth of 354 feet, but found no water. This hole is all that is left to mark the site of the dugout location.

It goes on to say, that the completion of the Overland...Pacific Telegraph line to Salt Lake City in October of 1861 and a few days later in San Francisco, meant the end of Pony Express. And on that day the telegraph lines went into operation. The Pony riders made their last ride.

During the 18 months that the Express was in operation, it added romance and adventure to the history of the Great West. The riders

traveled more than 650,000 miles with adventures with hostile Indians, road agents and blizzards. Some lost their lives in the discharge of their duty.

Well, my great Grandfather had been sent to Lehi by Brigham Young to be the town butcher. And they had a wall built around the city...what they called a Fort Wall. You maybe familiar with some of this history, I guess. He wasn't too happy living in there and so he found out that the Overland Stage was going to move west from Salt Lake and establish some posts. He went to Salt Lake and got a contract to establish a station on the Overland Stage route, which is why he moved out there.

He was quite friendly with the Indians for some reason, which is not apparent to me, but got along with them good and he moved out there and established this station.

He went against the advice of Bishop Evans. He told him that it was too dangerous out there with Indians and outlaws and all that stuff. Grandfather went anyway. He signed a contract and I don't know the details of it. I got most of this information by reading the accounts in the books which is quite an extensive account of his doings.

In this Lehi Book it included one of which I was surprised when I went to the index and I found out that when you looked under a section called Dorton's Well, I found out quite a bit about it.

And then another section in the Doctor's that there was an account of him sewing up the Indian chief. So he was considered, I guess, as one of the early doctors. Thats all I can tell you about my great Grandfather.